

Fall
2005



The FLAP

News for the Folks of Lake Accotink Park

703-569-3464



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Bye~Bye Birdie~

Where do birds go in the winter?



One of the most welcome signs of spring is the sound of chirping songbirds. Their return is dramatic; their departure is more subtle. One crisp fall day we walk outside and are greeted with silence, except perhaps for the rustle of dried leaves in the wind, and we realize we haven't heard any birdsongs for a while. When did they leave and where did they go?

Each fall and spring a dramatic phenomenon takes place. Hundreds of bird species migrate between breeding grounds in North America and wintering grounds in South and Central America. Birds that make this biannual trek are called *neotropical migratory birds*.

There are approximately 200 species of neotropical migratory birds in North America. Most of these birds are songbirds, but this umbrella term also includes some shorebirds, raptors and waterfowl. Many birds do migrate, but not all fall into this category. For example, robins are not neotropical migratory birds. They do migrate, but they winter in the southernmost portions of their breeding range, the southern United States. To be included, birds must winter south of the

Tropic of Cancer, which includes Mexico, Central and South American and the Caribbean Islands.



Some birds migrate from the arctic tundra all the way to the tip of South America—Tierra del Fuego—10,000 miles.

Many people think that birds migrate to avoid cold weather. This is not really the case. Birds migrate to take advantage of seasonal food abundance. Many of these migratory birds depend on flying insects, caterpillars, fruits and nectar as their main food sources. These are not readily available during winter months.

Steady food sources increase the chances for birds to successfully reproduce and raise more young. Scientists are not sure

exactly how birds decide when it is time to migrate. Most likely, however, southward migrations are triggered by changes in the amount of daylight.

Migration is a monumental task. Some birds migrate hundreds of miles; others migrate thousands of miles. Birds accomplish this in a series of flights which can last from several hours to several days straight. They make "pit-stops" at safe locations between flights to rest and eat to replenish their energy. The full migration can take from a few weeks to four months.

Blackpoll warblers, which can be seen at Lake Accotink Park during the fall when they migrate from their summer breeding grounds in New England, Canada and Alaska to their winter sites in South America, make a 72-hour non-stop flight over 2,000 miles of open water in three days. This degree of exertion is equivalent to a person running four-minute miles for 80 hours.

Most songbirds and water-

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Update!

The Lake Accotink Park Dredging Project

For only the third time in 45 years, a dredging project at Lake Accotink is underway. The first phase of the three-phase project began September 29th when the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors gave the contractor, Mobile Dredging and Pumping Company

of Chester, Pennsylvania, notice to proceed.

The goal of the project is to remove 161,000 cubic yards of sediment from Lake Accotink. Doing so will create an average lake depth of six to seven feet.

The dredge will be a hydraulic dredge, which means water will be kept in the lake at all times. The slurry (water and silt) will be pumped via a pipeline 2.8-miles to Virginia Concrete. This approach avoids the use of

(Continued on page 2)

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink/index.htm

Pet Pictures with Santa- Saturday December 10th, noon-2 pm

(Dredging Project continued from pg. 1)

heavy trucks to transport the dredged material.

The project's first phase is the preparation of the disposal site at Virginia Concrete. Visitors to the park and nearby residents will not see anything happening at Lake Accotink Park until phase two, which will begin in mid-November with the construction of the pipeline that will ultimately pump dredged material to the disposal site. The pipeline is 14 inches high and will be the first physical signs of the project at the park. It will run along the railroad right-of-way, cross the entrance road near the camp office and enter the lake near the Small Pavilion. It will be covered with a steel plate where it crosses the road. The pipeline will be inspected daily by contractor staff.

The third and final phase of the project will be the actual dredging, which will begin with the equipment launch in late February 2006. The equipment, including two barges and three push boats, will be lowered onto the lake using a crane. The equipment will be readied to start dredging at the beginning of March 2006. The project will then take about a year to finish.

In addition to the pipeline and equipment on the lake, this third phase will bring construction trucks and possibly some fences around equipment to the park. One truck will most likely be kept on the beach during working hours; other trucks will be parked in the gravel employee parking lot.

The dredging equipment is scheduled to run weekdays only, 7 am – 5 pm. The sound level is expected to be comparable to that of typical construction sites.

At this point, there is no indication that normal park operations or programs will be disrupted. Spring trout fishing, summer camps, boat rental and the annual Cardboard Boat Regatta will continue as planned.

All interested citizens are invited to attend a public meeting on the Lake Accotink Park dredging project on Tuesday December 6th at 7:30 pm. The meeting will be held at North Springfield Elementary School, 7602 Heming Court, Springfield, Virginia 22151.

Information regarding this project is posted on the Fairfax County Park Authority's website www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink/index.htm under the "Dredging Project" button. For further questions or to make comments, citizens can use the "online feedback form" at the bottom of that page.



Meet Karstena:

If you have called Lake Accotink Park recently, you may have noticed an unfamiliar voice greeting you on the other end of the phone. That voice belongs to the newest member of Lake Accotink Park's office team: Karstena Groner. Karstena is responsible for answering the phone and giving out park information, greeting visitors to the office, providing administrative support and assisting with special projects. Her most recent "special" project was to convince her husband to be the voice of the "Bunny Man" for Lake Accotink Park's Haunted History Cruise and then help during the cruise. It was such fun that she's now counting the days to her next special project, providing support for Santa's Hayrides.

Karstena has lived in the northern Virginia area for a little over a year. She grew up in southwestern Virginia, near Roanoke, and graduated in 2004 from the University of Mary Washington in Fredericksburg, with a major in sociology and concentration in religion.

What she likes most about working at Lake Accotink Park is that there is always something different going on each day. "The park hosts a variety of programs and classes and provides a service to the community," she added. Karstena also likes working with park staff and talking with park visitors. She enjoys the "friendly atmosphere."

She visits the park in her free time, where she likes to hike and walk along the creek. She also enjoys miniature golf, which she says is "a lot of fun." When she's not at Lake Accotink, Karstena likes to listen to talk radio and her iPod, watch reality TV and read and go out with friends.

Now Hiring

For Spring Break Camps!

April 10-14, 2006



Counselors are needed for these camps:

- Watershed Exploration
- Tennis (ages 8-13)
- Dog Care Camp

Preferred qualifications include a general interest in the subject matter and ability to work well with children. Must be at least 18 years old.

Call 703-569-3464 or stop by the main office for more information or to request an application.



News from the Fairfax County
Animal Shelter—
A Lake Accotink Park Partner

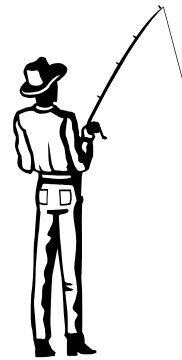
Home 4 the Holidays is a nationwide event organized to raise awareness of the joys of owning shelter-adopted pets. This year the Fairfax County Animal Shelter will join with 50 other shelters and rescue groups in Virginia and almost 2000 shelters and rescue groups nationally to help match orphaned pets with loving, life-time families. Organizers of the event from the Helen Woodard Animal Center in San Diego and the Iams pet company hope to link more than 350,000 dogs, cats, puppies, kittens and other companion pets with loving adoptive families.

The Fairfax Shelter, located at 4500 West Ox Road, Fairfax, will have Sunday adoption hours from noon to 4 p.m. on December 4th, 11th, and 18th to provide more weekend visitation time for potential adopters. The adoption campaign will be supported by shelter volunteers as well as volunteers from DC Metro No More Homeless Pets. The shelter will also participate in the GoodDogz Adoption Day at the Reston Town Center on Saturday, November 19 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and the Santa Paws Pet Photography event at Fair Oaks Mall on December 4 from 9a.m.-10:45 a.m. and December 11 from 7:15 p.m. to 9 p.m.

During the Home 4 the Holidays Campaign, adopters will receive Iams Pet Gift Paks, a *PetsIncredible* dog training video and a chance to win one of several dog or cat accessories including a Winchester Homes Dog House. All pets adopted during "Home 4 the Holidays" will have their pictures hung as an ornament on a special tree at the shelter honoring their adoption into loving families.

For more information on the Home 4 the Holidays Adoption Campaign, call the Fairfax County Animal Shelter at 703-830-1100.

Spring Trout Fishing will return to Lake Accotink Park February 2006



Is your name
on our
mailing
list?

Thanks for Asking: Can I bring my metal detector to the park?

Often we are asked if someone can bring in a metal detector to look for objects to include in Lake Accotink Park's exhibit. Even though these objects would not be removed from the park and would be available for everyone to see, this is not allowed. Metal detecting disturbs the land. Removing objects for any purpose destroys their *context* unless proper methodologies are used for documentation. An object's context is the relationship between that object and other artifacts, ecofacts (bones, pollen, seeds) and the area in which it was found.

Why is context important? Because it can tell us what an artifact alone cannot. For example, pot fragments found in a high concentration within a house site might indicate that area of the house was used as a storage area. One pot shard alone could not have told us that. The pot shards in Lake Accotink Park's exhibit were found in

a stream where they had been washed from elsewhere. Because they were not found in relationship to anything else, we don't know their story.

This policy helps protect the *cultural resources*, which include the artifacts, graves and building sites entrusted to the FCPA, and ensures their stories are available to present and future generations. *Cultural resources* are the physical objects that remain from a people's way of life that are studied to interpret how people lived in the past. These resources are nonrenewable, so once they are lost or taken, they are gone forever.

Metal detecting or relic hunting in all Fairfax County Park Authority property is strictly illegal, and there are legal consequences. Relic hunting encompasses both the taking of manmade or altered objects from parks for personal gain and taking them with the intent to give them to the park or the Park Author-

ity.

Once an artifact is removed from its location, it can never be put back the same way. Professional archaeological excavations are done with a strict set of standards. Because excavation of a site it is permanent, the benefits of doing so must outweigh the benefits of leaving it alone. Often sites are excavated because they cannot be preserved in the long-term or because of the research value.

Everyone can be a steward and help protect our park resources! Anyone who witnesses objects being removed from a park should call Fairfax County Police at 703-691-2131. If you find an artifact or are interested in volunteering, please call the Park Authority's Cultural Resource Protection Section at 703-534-3881.

(Thanks for Asking! continued from page 1)

fowl migrate at night if they can because cooler evening temperatures mean less energy is expended cooling down, and they can stay better hydrated. The air is typically calmer, and there are fewer predators. Migrating at night also means they can forage for food during the day. Nocturnal migrants fly at altitudes between 500 and 6,000 feet at speeds of 15-45 miles per hour. Raptors, on the other hand, migrate mainly during the day because they can soar on rising air currents.

Anatomically speaking, birds are well suited to the task of migration. Feathers provide the insulation necessary to maintain a high body temperature (101-113° F). The long feathers on their wings generate the lift necessary to reach the highest altitudes. Birds' four-chambered hearts are large for their body size. Proportionally a bird's heart weighs six times more than a person's heart. The rapid heartbeat, which averages 550 bpm for a songbird, aids the high metabolic needs migration demands. In addition to lungs, birds also have air sacs, which act like bellows and provide the lungs with a constant supply of air to remain inflated.

Before birds migrate, they increase their fat reserves. This greater appetite and food consumption is termed *hyperphagia* and begins two-three weeks prior to migrating. Hyperphagia allows birds to add one to three percent of their body weight through fat deposition per day. At this time, birds may switch their primary diet from from insects to fruits and berries because those carbohydrates are more easily converted to fat.

Migration is fraught with perils. These birds are dependent on habitats in two hemispheres and do not recognize political, cultural or economic borders. Birds are especially sensitive to climate change, habitat structure and toxins in the environment. Thus, their decline is alarming. The number of birds de-



Blackpoll warblers use Lake Accotink Park as a spring and fall pit-stop.

tected by radar crossing the Gulf of Mexico has decreased by 50 percent in the last 20 years. During the last 10 years, nine species of neotropical migratory shorebirds have declined by 50 percent. One-third of the migrant species formerly found in Rock Creek Park in Washington, DC have disappeared. Habitat destruction is a major contributing factor. Not only are safe, adequate breeding and wintering grounds necessary for the survival of these species, but "pit-stops" along the way are needed as well. Neotropical migratory birds require safe spots in between to find food, water and refuge. Too great a loss in any of these areas can seriously impact the birds.

Migratory birds have an important value beyond being pleasing the eye and ear. Like all plants and animals, they play an important environmental role. Their role as pollinators and seed dispersers is well known. However, they also protect forests by eating insects and caterpillars which, if left unchecked, could spread disease and destroy foliage.

You Can Help!

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Recycle and use recycled products; that makes fewer demands on forests.

When landscaping, use native trees and shrubs and try to avoid the use of pesticides. Native plantings provide habitat and a food source.

Reduce window reflection; some birds use the location of the stars when migrating. Bright lights can confuse birds. They can become lost or expend unnecessary amounts of energy so that they cannot find a "pit-stop" for food and water or they cannot complete their journey. Collisions with objects, such as windows, are another hazard that can be avoided with the addition of stickers or static clings to windows.

Don't let your cat outside. Stray and feral cats have decimated the songbird population. Cats are domesticated animals and not a natural predator in this environment.

Purchase shade-grown coffee. Shade-grown coffee is a more environmentally and economically friendly means of coffee growing. Coffee plantations using this method provide abundant habitat for birds. Additionally, because the land is not being clear cut and over planted, the soil has a greater longevity and farmers are able to use it longer.

**For more info go to:**

<http://nationalzoo.si.edu/ConservationAndScience/MigratoryBirds/>

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# High School Students!

## Need volunteer hours?

## Contact Lake Accotink Park to learn about opportunities!



703-569-0285 or email [lee.shenefiel@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:lee.shenefiel@fairfaxcounty.gov)

## Check-It-Out:

### Catch up with the new and exciting things going on at Lake Accotink Park!

**Have you heard...** Lake Accotink Park is looking for volunteers to join its Trail Watch program? Help keep the park safe and enjoyable for everyone with little additional time commitment. If you enjoy being at the park, this program is for you! Call 703-569-0285 for more information or an application.

**Have you noticed...** the new split rail fencing and landscaping around the camp office and the lake pavilion? This is the handiwork of Ed Miller and Ken Fulling, two members of Lake Accotink Park's maintenance team.

**And...** the local press coverage of Lake Accotink Park's summer camps? Camp coordinators Ashleigh Eakin and Stacey Langsner were profiled, as well the Outdoor Adventure Camp Program and Raven Quest, a teen outdoor camp that's a partnership between the Park Authority, Fairfax

County Department of Community and Recreation Services and Fairfax County Police Department.

**And...** the new landscape work on the miniature golf course?

**Have you seen...** the Adopt-A-Stream signs posted near the trestle parking lot and dam spillway? These signs, which note the Accotink Creek is maintained by Lake Accotink Park and volunteers, were supplied by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

**Don't forget to pick up...** a winter *Park-Takes* magazine, available at parks, libraries, and other locations. This valuable tool helps you plan fun and enrichment into your spare time. Sign yourself up for an art class, outdoor fitness class, tai chi or yoga... or register Fluffy for dog obedience class. New Year's resolutions are just around the corner, so seize the day! Your

life will be better for it.

**Have you...** walked the loop trail around the lake? Several serious washouts were recently repaired by the maintenance staff.

**And finally...** the Cross-County Trail markers and maps have been installed. There are several markers for the trail where it runs along the parking lot near the trestle and through the marina where it connects with the main loop trail. The map of the Cross-County was installed near the beach area. Much of the trail is completed. The entire trail, which runs from the Occoquan River to the Potomac River, is slated to be finished this winter with the Park Authority's grand celebration of its completion set for May 2006. Lake Accotink Park will be part of the festivities; watch for details.

## Old-Fashioned Holiday Fun!

### Horse-drawn Hayrides at Lake Accotink Park

- Keepsake Digital Photo with Sant
- Horse-Drawn Hayrides
- Hot Cocoa



Saturday December 10  
7 pm–10 pm  
\$8 per person

- Holiday Storytelling and Music Around the Fire

703-569-0285

# See you in the spring!

Lake Accotink Park is both a summer home and a seasonal pit-stop for many species of neotropical migratory songbirds. Here are three birds that summer at Lake Accotink Park. How many have you seen here?



## Ruby-throated Hummingbird

This metallic green bird is only about three inches long and weighs about as much as a penny. It makes a 500 mile non-stop flight over the Gulf of Mexico on the way to wintering grounds, generally beginning in September. Some birds travel as far south at Panama before making their way back again in the spring. Hummingbirds' hearts beat 1,000 times per minute, which helps support the metabolism needed for such a journey.

The curved beak of this bird is well suited for sipping nectar from flowers. In addition to nectar, hummingbirds eat small insects such as ants and gnats for protein.

Hummingbirds build their nests from the webs of spiders and tent caterpillars.

## Purple Martin

Purple martins are the largest of the nine swallow species breeding in North America. Purple martins migrate between 600 and 6,000 miles to spend the winter in Brazil and Bolivia. They are one of the earliest species of neotropical migratory birds to return north to their breeding grounds.



East of the Rocky Mountains, purple martins are completely dependent on human-made housing. West of this range, they nest in abandoned woodpecker cavities. Non-native European starlings and house sparrows compete with martins for housing.

People frequently put up martin houses in hopes of attracting colonies of the birds. Purple martins' diets consist entirely of flying insects, which are caught in flight. Frequently purple martins are touted as being excellent at controlling mosquitoes, but for the most part, the paths of martins and mosquitoes rarely cross. Mosquitoes fly closer to the ground than martins feed, and some species of mosquitoes only come out at night when martins do not feed. Generally non-discriminatory in what they will catch, martins do eat a variety of pesky insects including Japanese beetles, flies, midges, flying ants, ballooning spiders and moths.

## Wood Thrush

Of this migrant Thoreau said, "whenever a man hears it he is young, and Nature is in her spring." The wood thrush is more often heard than seen. Its call is a distinct flute-like song with two notes sung at once. The song is composed of three distinct parts, which the birds reconfigure to make their own unique repertoire of songs.

Wood thrushes begin their southward migration in mid-August and generally fly at night to take advantage of cooler temperatures. A few individuals begin later and do not depart for their 600-3750 mile journeys until September or October. The majority of wood thrushes fly across the Gulf of Mexico and winter in the tropical forests of southern Mexico and Central America.

Sadly, just as with many other species, recent years have seen the wood thrush population decline alarmingly. This has been attributed to habitat losses in its wintering range and forest fragmentation, which increases the chances of cowbird nest parasitism. (Cowbirds prefer forest edges and lay their eggs in nests occupied by other birds for that bird to take care of the cowbirds' young—often with detrimental consequences to the other eggs.)



## Fairfax County Park Authority Lake Accotink Park



7500 Accotink Park Road,  
Springfield, Virginia 22150

Phone: 703-569-0285

TTY: 703-569-5200

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/  
parks/accotink/index.htm](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/accotink/index.htm)

## Park Management:

Tawny Hammond, Park Manager

Julie Tahan, Assistant Manager

Lee Ann Shenefiel, Operations Manager

Axel Boy, Evening Supervisor

Ed Miller, Grounds Supervisor

For FLAP comments or suggestions,  
please email:

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**ADA Accommodations:** Fairfax County is committed to giving all citizens equal access to recreation and leisure opportunities. In keeping with that policy and the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations are provided to individuals with disabilities in all Park Authority programs, services, and facilities. ADA accommodations include sign interpreters, alternative information formats, program modifications and inclusion support. Contact the ADA Specialist at 703-324-8563 or (TTY) 703-803-3354 for additional information.